

SUPPORTING THE PETITION TO LIST CALIFORNIA BURROWING OWLS AS A STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES

I -WHY?

Burrowing Owls were once numerous in southern California but it is clear that they are now facing extirpation. They desperately need protection from further habitat loss, the ravages of rodenticides, and many other threats.

The California Fish and Game Commission is considering state endangered species status for the owls which would give them enhanced protection from current threats such as habitat destruction. It is the last hope for the California Burrowing Owls.

At their upcoming October 10 meeting, the Commission will decide whether or not to proceed with the consideration for endangered status. We need as many people as possible to encourage the Commission to advance Burrowing Owls to "candidate" status so the process of consideration can continue.

II-HOW?

There are several ways for you to send comments to the California Fish and Game Commission:

The easiest way is to submit comments is via email:

- Email comments that are received before 10/4 will be printed out and given to commissioners to read before the hearing.
- Comments received after 10/4 and before 10/10 will be printed out and given to commissioners at the meeting.
- The best option is to submit your comments via email by Thursday, 10/3, at the latest.

-Submit comments to fgc@fgc.ca.gov

Put "Burrowing Owl CESA Listing" in the subject line.

III-WHAT DO I SAY?

If you want ideas for your comments, here are some:

Burrowing Owl CESA Listing Talking Points

From Jeff Miller 9/25/24

- Tell the Commission about any experiences or connections you have with burrowing owls and why you care about them
- Urge the Commission to designate five imperiled burrowing owl populations (San Francisco Bay Area, Central-Western California, Southwestern California, Central Valley, and Southern Desert Range) as candidate species under the California Endangered Species Act
- Candidate status for these declining owl populations will allow the CA Department of Fish & Wildlife to conduct a full status review of the species and make an informed recommendation to the Commission about whether to designate imperiled populations as threatened or endangered species
- Burrowing owls were once widespread throughout California but have suffered significant habitat loss due to conversion of grasslands to sprawl development and eradication of ground squirrels.
- Burrowing owls have been eliminated as a breeding species or are near extirpation in nearly one-third of their former range in California.
- Statewide surveys showed a 60% decline in California's burrowing owl colonies from the 1980s to the early 1990s, and a further 11% decline in breeding pairs by 2007. Loss of breeding colonies has accelerated since 2015.
- Outside of the Imperial Valley, only 2,500 or fewer breeding pairs of burrowing owls remain in the state.
- We are on a trajectory to lose breeding burrowing owl populations entirely from the San Francisco Bay Area, Central Coast, and Southwestern California; breeding owls are also rapidly declining in the Central Valley and southern desert regions.
- The relatively large burrowing owl population in the Imperial Valley does not serve as a dispersal source to augment isolated or depleted owl populations elsewhere in the state. Extensive data from banded burrowing owls shows very little evidence of movements of resident owls between regional populations in California.
- Since they can live in the margins of infrastructure and agriculture, burrowing owls are often considered to be adaptable. But they have very specific habitat requirements, including burrows excavated by ground squirrels; grasslands or arid environments with short, sparse vegetation; adequate foraging habitat with abundant and available prey; and opportunities for wintering and dispersal.
- Large burrowing owl colonies on private lands are not being protected, and habitat requirements are not being met even on many public lands, which is why state listing is needed.